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ABSTRACT

An experimental approach to individualized instruction in German 1 and 2, based on the A-LM series revised edition, is described. The program neither prescribes behavioral objectives nor requires contracting for work to be performed for specific grades. Procedures followed in the preparation of instructional materials are reviewed. Results of the program indicate that first-year students need a basic grounding in German before proceeding to study on their own. Significant changes in teacher and student attitudes are attributed to the change in teaching methods. The appendix contains a letter to parents, an outline for students in the German 2 class, and a student attitudinal questionnaire. (RL)

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Individualized Instruction at Levels I and II

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One of the questions teachers should be asking themselves today is whether or not they are preparing their students to be independent learners as well as independent thinkers, whether their students will be capable of directing continuous inquiry into a world in which the unknowable, the unpredictable, the changing factors are as high as they are in ours today. Because we asked ourselves this question, and because we lacked complete satisfaction with our conventional four year German program at Ramapo High School, we decided to start an experimental pilot project in Individualized Instruction at the German 1 and German 2 levels. The student directed aims were as follows: to cut down student boredom and/or frustration, to attempt to improve student attitude toward foreign language study and thereby decrease the drop-out rate at the end of German 2, and to attempt to improve basic knowledge of German at Level 1 and Level 2. The teacher directed aims were to discover, whether or not a teacher with a standard text and tape series already in use, could, at any point, with a minimum of lead time, prepare adequate materials for individualized instruction as an on-going process, whether this could be done without additional funds or personnel, and whether the teacher frustration concomitantly noticed in heterogeneous foreign language situations could be diminished.

In January 1972, one class was put on I.I. at each of two levels, Level 1 and 2, with two classes kept as controls. Our I.I. was to be a multi-media approach. The textbook; workbook and tapes were ALM Revised Edition. Each student was to progress at the rate he finds most comfortable and most rewarding. The decision to take a Unit Test was left to the student's sense of readiness. Before taking a Unit Test, the teacher was to check out the student's ability orally. A re-test was to be made available for all students achieving under a pre-determined score on the Unit Test. The students in the two classes chosen were given a letter to take home which served a dual purpose. (See Appendix #1) It explained the project to the parents and asked for voluntary help as native speakers in the classroom or as typists. It was felt that the results after one semester of I.I. would yield enough material for serious study by the administration. The questions we planned to ask ourselves at the end of the semester were; has the student attitude improved, how well does he know his German, and how has the teacher fared.

Both levels spent three days in an orientation program. We outlined the program, indicated the location of all materials and taught everyone to use the equipment correctly. (See Appendix #2) We decided that 12 Units of study would be the goal for

the first year, and Units 13 through 24 were designated for Level 2. A minimum acceptable grade of 80% on all Unit Tests was also decided upon. A student getting less than 80 should be allowed a retest as soon as he desires, the second grade to be the final grade for the Unit of work. We prefer that the re-test be taken within one week. A third re-test is also possible. The purpose and use of the Study Sheets was explained in detail. The students were encouraged to share the burden of record keeping. In spite of their current vogue, Behavioral Objectives as such were not to be stated, nor were there any contracts to be signed. The program stressed the importance of learning structure and vocabulary and to this end the students were to apply themselves. The materials available were the ALM textbooks, tapes and workbooks, together with the test booklet for each student.

The procedure followed in the creation of the Study Sheets was identical at both levels. A code was decided upon as follows: Study Sheet = SS, Workbook = W, Textbook = TB and Tape = T. All tapes were indexed and marked in two ways for use on tape recorders in the classroom and for use on the recorders in the language lab. After extensive examination of the Unit by the teacher, all materials are assembled and a 'table of contents' or format is arranged in simple steps. This format consists of

one or two typewritten pages and is stapled on the top of the Study Sheets. Additional materials are created for each Unit whenever there is a need. These may include:

1. vocabulary lists to be completed by the students
2. more simplified or more detailed grammar explanations. Or perhaps a grammar explanation from a different point of view.
3. more reading material, self-created or copied, using the vocabulary of the Unit as much as possible.
4. more reading material about the culture, geography, history, art, or whatever else is mentioned in the Unit of work.
5. more exercises incorporating the grammar of the Unit.
6. more review exercises (such as the adjective endings if this has already been learned) using the vocabulary of the Unit.
7. Listening Comprehension Exercises from the tapes are typed and mimeographed as part of the Study Sheets. Slower students hear the correct answer on the tapes, but need to see the script to understand why they made their error.
8. At the German 1 level, all sentences in the Basic Material need to be manipulated as questions, statements in the different persons, and commands, in order to insure internalization of knowledge.

Answer sheets are needed for all workbook, Study Sheet and tape exercises. These additional materials are all typed, proof-

read, mimeographed and stapled together with the suggested approach or 'index' on the top. Teacher time involved is from two to five hours per unit depending upon the amount of work that is created. The answer sheets are kept on a convenient shelf for the students' constant reference. The re-tests must also be typed up. This is simply a copy of the original test. Segmented or partial re-tests are also prepared. These tests are for those students who err 100% on only one section, and for these tests new material is used.

Students share the responsibility for preparing the materials. They index tapes, and the better students create some of the exercises, all of the answer sheets, and a great many extras. Typing students do all of the typing except for the re-tests which are typed by parent volunteers. The co-curricular materials created are all on a voluntary basis and give the students a creative outlet while giving the teacher the opportunity for class activity. These include slide presentations, films, film-strips, pictures, declamations of poems or drama with mimeographed hand-outs for the class, etc. Although I was immediately able to set up a typing pool with student and parent volunteers, native speakers for the classroom were hard to find. Only two people volunteered on a more or less regular basis, two periods a day, twice a week. We also have

visitors from local schools and colleges, all of whom we immediately put to work. Most of them are German students or teachers who come to see the I.I. program in progress.

What happened at Level 2 after four weeks of operation was quite different from what I had expected from my previous readings and observations. I had a seven Unit spread within the group of 19 students. Level 1 with 25 students had a more normal spread of three Units. However, three students in Level 1 had opted to review from the very beginning, and these were on Unit 3, 4, and 5 at the end of the four week period. Students found the Study Sheets comprehensive, and most of the questions asked pertained to the location of the various materials within the classroom rather than to the contents of the sheets. Finally we put an inventory list on the bulletin board, reminding students of the exact location of all materials.

After a student was checked out orally by the teacher and found to be ready he could sign up for the Unit Test. Here are some items regarding testing which we found quite interesting. Students desire to take their Unit Test even after a week's vacation. They ask to be excused from viewing an unexpected film if they have signed up for a test that day. Any and all

forms of cheating seem to be non-existant. Students help each other find their mistakes, they do not promulgate answers. Probably because they know that the only grade that goes into the Gradebook to be used in calculating final averages is the student's final grade for each Unit, which must be 80 or higher. A separate folder is kept on each student, and he may refer to it at all times. Within the folder are his pre-tests, tests, re-tests and partial re-tests together with a master sheet on which he indicates how long he takes for each Unit and which material caused him the most difficulty. Thus he identifies material for immediate review before he begins the work of the following Unit.

On February 18, after six weeks of I.I. a questionnaire was given to each of the students in the group. The results of this questionnaire were used to help us evaluate any change in student attitude and to make needed adjustments within the program itself. (See Appendix #3) As a result of student criticism and suggestion, the following steps were taken. More tape recorders were obtained, and we now have five with headsets, which seems ideal for a class of 20 students. Our appeal to the community was widened to include all possible native speakers in our towns. This was done through newspaper

articles and public relations with clubs, societies, and senior citizens groups. At the students' request, the teacher used no class time for record keeping, thereby devoting the entire time to circulating among the students. Speaking German was emphasized. Students were informed that no deadlines or test dates would be set, nor would any strong discipline be imposed. We felt this would not be germaine to our concept of I.I. Students who still needed a personal explanation of a grammar concept after it had been explained for a specific unit, were encouraged to ask for it. Teacher assured students that an attempt would be made to construct more drills and exercises, but that more tapes would probably not be possible. The time-consuming nature of the creation of tape materials was again explained to the students, and more volunteer help for this task was requested, and it was forthcoming. At a student's suggestion, we did decide to make a separate listening comprehension tape for each unit, to be used as a review before taking the Unit Test.

After 18 weeks, another questionnaire was distributed. (See Appendix #4) The results of this second questionnaire indicated a very positive attitude towards I.I. on the part of the students at both levels. Here are some examples. At Level 2, in the

group of 19 students, 12 students consider their work good or excellent as opposed to 4 at the beginning of the program. None now consider their work unsatisfactory contrasted to 7 before we began I.I. Eight students like German class better than most classes, four look forward to it, and seven don't mind coming. None dislike it. Thirteen feel they are learning German better than before I.I., four are learning as well as before, and two not as well as before. Four can work better independently in other subjects, ten can apply some of their learned study skills in other subjects. Four speak more German than before, seven speak as much as before, while six speak less, and two never speak at all. Four students now plan a longer sequence of the language at the high school level while three plan to continue it in college.

At Level 1 the response was similar. Perhaps the best I can do regarding some interesting comments at this level, is to give you verbatim the comments of an anonymous student;
"I feel that this program is not working out for this German 1 class. I say this because classwork is at the minimum. The reason it is not working out is that Freshmen need one solid year of language before that can determine whether they want to work and learn. That is why this program is working for

the sophomores. They have already had one year of German and have decided this is what they want. In the case of the Freshmen we need one solid year before we can decide. The failure of this program I feel is not because of the teacher but rather because of the students' lack of self-discipline." Six other students at Level 1 commented in a similar vein. It was interesting to note that several of the students at Level 1 who had been extremely good students while the class was taught in the traditional manner, with competitive interaction a public spectacle, now dropped to 30 and never raised themselves any higher. Although all of the Level 1 students expressed a desire to continue with I.I. at Level 2 next year, our decision pertaining to I.I. at Level 1 had to be a negative one.

The three German teachers in the Department discussed the aforementioned results and the level of accomplishment of each student. A decision had to be made concerning I.I. for the school year 72-72. Based on observable student attitude and measureable results in student achievement at the German 1 level, it was decided not to continue I.I. in the first year of the language. However, based on the students' positive reaction to I.I. on our attitudinal questionnaires, provision will have to be made within the traditional framework for the

unusually gifted student to forge ahead on an individualized basis, and at the other end of the spectrum, for the very slow learner to complete less than the syllabus quota without the stigma of failure. I.I. will be expanded to include all second level students. This decision was based on four major factors.

1. The satisfactory quantity of German learned by each student at the second year level in our experiment.
2. The quality of each student's accomplishment at this level.
3. The fact that we chose to make the second year of study a more demanding year for grammatical and lexical correctness.
4. The undesired but still present factor of the 2nd year terminal language student. We felt that such a student, in an individualized program, has a better chance to learn as much German as he personally feels he needs, and we feel that a student with a firm basic understanding will always be best prepared for more advanced study if he desires to continue at a later date.

Conclusion:

From our experiment it would seem that an on-going conversion to I.I. at any point in the school year is possible with a minimum of outside help and administrative support. What is needed is a maximum of teacher dedication and student cooperation.

Although the work load for the teacher in an I.I. program seems larger than in a traditional situation we found this to be only relatively true. The nature of the teacher's work changes. It becomes more creative. The routine time-consuming chores are completely eliminated. The teacher structures the work and creates additional material. She does not spend time in the fruitless chores of correcting and calculating grades, writing out daily lesson plans, or 'preparing' for her classes. Student-teacher interaction becomes much more personal, and the sterile, impersonal aspect of classroom instruction about which many students rightly complain, is completely eliminated in the individualized approach. Although lack of time is always a factor, in I.I. one at least knows that the time one does have is being utilized in the most meaningful way, in a way that is profitable for the student and rewarding for the teacher. The most significant change noted was the attitudinal change of both students and teacher. Although a slightly higher achievement in the experimental group can not be considered statistically significant, their very positive attitude made their study of German and the speaking of German a very pleasurable experience. This pleasurable experience has resulted in many planned trips to German-speaking lands, continued study at the high-school level, and some talk of electing German as a major field of concentration during their college years.

Copy of letter sent to all parents

Dear Parents:

Your son/daughter is now involved in an Individualized Instruction program in our German class. We hope in this way to allow the more eager learners to go ahead while we can give more time and attention to those with some problems in this subject.

If you are a native speaker of German, we could certainly use your talents whenever you would like to be helpful. This could be on a very informal basis. Come whenever you can or want to. The first and fifth periods are on Individualized Instruction. Period 1 runs from 8 to 9 (roughly) and period 5 from 11:10 to 12:00. These are the two times of the day that I could really use some fellow German speakers!

If you yourself don't speak German, perhaps you have a friend or neighbor that might be interested. You can call me at school between 10 and 11 (my lunch period) or at my home in Tenafly in the evening after 8 P.M. (not on Wednesdays when I'm at Rutgers University in New Brunswick.) My home phone number is 568-7750.

Thank you in advance for any help you are able to give me. By the way, from time to time I could use a good typist, and she would not have to know any German! Those of you who would just like to come and visit, and see how this Individualized Instruction works, are welcome to come any time.

Sincerely,

(signed) Gisela Schwab
German Teacher

Outline for Students in Mrs. Schwab's Individualized German 2.

I. Each student assumes full responsibility for his own progress.

II. The materials available for your use are as follows:
- A. Textbook = TB
- B. Workbook = W
- C. Study Sheets = SS
- D. Tape = T + reel# = footage
- E. Tape recorders
- F. Language Lab (on Thursdays)
- G. Test Booklets
- H. Answer keys and answer booklets
- I. Student Progress File

III. Procedure:
- A. Student is placed in the Unit of work indicated by three placement instruments:
  1. a 50 unit comprehension check
  2. a writing sample
  3. a 50 item grammar check
- B. The teacher introduces each unit by explanation of the grammar concept involved in that unit. Usually the 'unit spread' within a class group of 20 pupils is 4 to 5.
- C. Student works through all of the materials using the Index (which consists of the first page or two of the Study Sheets) as his guide.
- D. Teacher circulates throughout class and helps students during the entire class period. (If some record-keeping has to be done during the class period, students are encouraged to come to the desk if they desire help.)
- E. Advanced German students are asked to participate in the classes during their free periods, along with native German speakers from the community.
- F. Film days or other group activity days are mandatory for the entire class. (An exception is made for those students who are signed up for Unit Tests)
- G. Tests are taken when the student proves his readiness to be measured, by:
  1. having completed all the work suggested in the Study Sheets
  2. having successfully passed the oral check-out given by the teacher
- H. Re-tests: All students receiving less than 80%(B) on a Unit Test must take a re-test within the following week.

IV. Evaluation:

Although it is desirable that each student complete the entire text, this is not reasonable, given the varied abilities of the students. In order to obtain a grade of B for the course, the student must complete Unit 22 by June (for Level 2 only) The average student can complete a Unit of work in three weeks.

V. Care of Equipment:

Because students now handle the tape and tape recorders individually, they are asked to exert special care. One set of tapes costs several hundred dollars, and ruining a tape would cause great inconvenience to all the students in our program (about 85) You are asked to use the same care in handling the Answer Booklets and the Answer Sheets, since they too take time and work to write.

VI. Student-Teacher Cooperation:

The students are asked to volunteer to type, staple, and help create supplementary materials, as well as to help those students who seem to be having difficulty. If anyone's mother would like to volunteer for some typing, it would certainly be appreciated.

Good Luck!

G. Schwab

Questionnaire #1

1. When I first began to study German, I intended to study the subject
   a. as few years as possible
   b. 3 years
   c. 4 years
   d. 4 years and possibly more in college

2. Now I intend to study German
   a. as few years as possible
   b. 3 years
   c. 4 years
   d. 4 years and possibly more in college

3. My performance in German before we started this I.I. project was
   a. unsatisfactory
   b. satisfactory
   c. good
   d. excellent

4. My performance now is
   a. unsatisfactory
   b. satisfactory
   c. good
   d. excellent

5. Circle one:
   a. I do not enjoy my German class
   b. I don't mind coming to German class
   c. I look forward to German class
   d. I like German class better than most other classes

6. What do you think about Individualized Instruction in your other subjects, such as English or Social Studies?
   a. I'm sure it wouldn't work
   b. It might work
   c. It would be a lot better than what we have now
   d. I wish they would try it

7. Here are some suggestions I would make to improve our program:

8. Here is some criticism I would make of our program:

Questionnaire #2

1. When I first began to study German, I intended to study it
   a. 4 years and possibly more in college
   b. 4 years
   c. 3 years
   d. as few years as possible

2. Now I intend to study German
   a. 4 years and possibly more in college
   b. 4 years
   c. 3 years
   d. as few years as possible

3. My performance in German before I.I. was
   a/ excellent
   b/ gppd
   c. satisfactory
   d. unsatisfactory

4/ My performance now is
   a. excellent
   b. good
   c. satisfactory
   d. unsatisfactory

5. Circle one:
   a. I like German class better than most other classes
   b. I look forward to German class
   c. I don't mind coming to German class
   d. I do not enjoy my German class

6. After these five months in our I.I. project I am
   a. learning German better than before
   b. learning German as well as before
   c. learning German less well than before I.I.
   d. feeling completely negative about the learning of German because I don't like I.I.

7. After working on I.I. in my German class:
   a. I can work better independently in other classes
   b. I can apply some of my study skills in other subjects
   c. My I.I. approach hasn't helped me develpp study skills
   d. My I.I. experience has affected my previous working habits negatively because of the lack of imposed organization and discipline.

8. The speaking of German. I and my classmates speak German in the classroom:
   a. more than before I.I.
   b. as much as before I.I.
   c. less than we did before I.I.
   d. never!

9. Outside of our classroom situation, I speak German with friends, classmates, relatives or neighbors
   a. whenever possible
   b. sometimes
   c. never; by choice!
   d. never; I couldn't if I tried!

10. Outside of our classroom I read German newspapers, magazines or books
   a. on a regular basis
   b. quite often
   c. once in a while
   d. never

11. Concerning our re-tests which so many of you are taking: We should:
   a. keep them as they are
   b. make complete new tests as re-tests with new material
   c, re-test only on very weak points
   d, not re-test at all

Please use the back of this sheet for any more burning criticisms and also for constructive suggestions for program improvement.